

WITH CHRIST AFTER THE RESURRECTION
Acts 1:1-9

Intro: For the ten Sundays up to and including Easter I have spoken to you about the events which led up to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We, in the process, have taken a close look at some of the people who were involved.

For me it has been one of the richest studies I have ever had in the Word, and I would like to go back over it again right away--beginning with the last Passover.

But we must move on.

However, I believe that having these events in our minds we are now in the best possible position to look at that which followed. Therefore, I am asking you to turn with me tonight to the book of Acts, chapter 1.

Historically, the book of Acts continues on to tell us what resulted from the death and resurrection of Christ. In particular it is the sequel of the Gospel according to Luke--since Acts was written by Luke, and written to the same, one man, Theophilus.

It seems rather strange that the Lord would leave His disciples at this time. Even they seemed to sense this by their question recorded in Acts 1:6. Now should be the time for a forward move on the part of the Lord.

And this is exactly what it is going to be, but we are confronted again, as we so often are in the Word of God, with the truth that God revealed through the prophet Isaiah some 700 years before:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are yours ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8, 9).

The Apostle Paul must have felt the same way when he wrote to the Roman church,

" . . . how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Rom. 11:33b).

On Easter Sunday morning I spoke to you about the resurrection of Christ, and one of the things which I emphasized was the appearances which our Lord made to different people AFTER His resurrection.

ONE VERY UNUSUAL THING ABOUT THOSE APPEARANCES IS THAT THERE

IS NO EVIDENCE THAT OUR LORD APPEARED TO ANYONE EXCEPT HIS OWN FOLLOWERS, HIS OWN DISCIPLES.

Does this not reflect the fact that His ways are different?

If you had been in the Lord's place would you not have paid a visit to Pontius Pilate? Would you not have interrupted the meeting of the Sanhedrin with a personal appearance?

Yes, you would, and I would have done the same. But the Lord's ways are not our ways!

I would like to point out something else from our Scripture this evening that I would have done differently.

I would never have had Luke write the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

I would have had Peter, or John, or Matthew, or one of the other Apostles, but not Luke.

Why?

Because Luke was not an eye-witness. He did not see the Lord. We have in the Gospel of Luke the record of a man who received all of his information from others. To be sure he was a witness of much that he recorded in Acts, but not of the life of Christ, nor of the death of Christ, nor of His resurrection!

Why did the Lord do it this way?

We need eye-witnesses, to be sure. But we also need the support of one who was not an eye-witness, one who talked to those who were, one who could examine all of the information, comparing carefully what others reported, and then come to his own conclusion as to the truth or falsity of what those who claimed to be eye-witnesses were saying.

What were his results?

It is very possible that this man, who is all likelihood was a Gentile, came to the Lord as a result of his investigations. He may have been led to Christ by the Apostle Paul--we do not know. BUT ONE THING IS SURE: LUKE HAD NO DOUBT ABOUT THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST, HE HAD NO DOUBT ABOUT THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST, HE HAD NO DOUBT ABOUT THE DEITY OF CHRIST, HE HAD NO DOUBT ABOUT THE DEATH OF CHRIST, HE HAD NO DOUBT ABOUT THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, NOR DID HE HAVE ANY DOUBT ABOUT THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST. Here is a man, not an eye-witness, who, after examining all of the

reports concerning Christ, was absolutely sure that all of the reports as he gives them in the Gospel of Luke were completely reliable.

Note what he says in Acts 1:3.

Do you not see how this gives even greater strength to the reports than even if one of the Apostles had written these two books of the New Testament?

But note this other point: He was so convinced that he was willing to identify himself with the work of the Apostles following the ascension of the Lord.

Luke could not turn away from the truth after he had thoroughly investigated all of the facts. Instead, he was so convinced, that he wrote these two books to establish one man, Theophilus, and to assure Theophilus that what he had written about the Lord Jesus was absolutely true!

I. WHO WAS THEOPHILUS?

All that we know about him is recorded in Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1.

There are two clues in these verses:

- (1) He must have been a Gentile.
- (2) Since Luke calls him, "most excellent," he designates him as a government official, possibly even royalty, since this term can be translated, your excellency.

His name means, loved of God, and we seem to be safe in assuming that he was a believer.

II. WHAT DID LUKE WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THAT PERIOD AFTER THE RESURRECTION? We are thinking now of things in addition to His appearances, and thinking particularly of the period between the resurrection and the ascension.

LUKE IS CONCERNED HERE PRIMARILY WITH WHAT THE LORD JESUS SAID.

He spoke about the Holy Spirit.

He spoke about the kingdom of God.

And, upon request, He spoke about Israel.

A. The Holy Spirit. Three times in these verses our writer mentions the Holy Spirit (vv. 2, 5, 8).

Remember that Luke is writing between 25 and 30 years after the ascension of Christ. Therefore, these words would stand out in even greater importance.

1. He speaks about the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Lord Jesus (v. 2).

One thing which Luke emphasizes in his Gospel is the relationship of the Spirit of God to Jesus Christ. SUBSEQUENT EVENTS IN THE EARLY CHURCH PROVED THAT THE SAME SPIRIT OF GOD WHO HAD BEEN WITH THE LORD DURING HIS EARTHLY MINISTRY CONTINUED WITH HIM AFTER HIS RESURRECTION!

Our Lord told them to go back to Jerusalem and to wait until the Holy Spirit was given to them. The Holy Spirit would baptize them. They would learn later what that meant, and how it related to the Church. The Holy Spirit would also empower them. They would also learn the importance of this as time went on. BUT LUKE CAN SEE SINCE HE IS NOW WRITING HISTORY THAT NOTHING THAT THE LORD SAID DURING THOSE DAYS WAS ANY MORE IMPORTANT.

Luke knows now that nothing of the blessings recorded in the book of Acts would have been possible apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. In fact, many who have studied this book have suggested that it be re-named, The Acts of The Holy Spirit.

This emphasis needs to be made again and again.

2. He speaks about the kingdom of God.

This means that He talked to them about the future of the Lord's work on earth. They had ministered to Israel. They had longed to see Israel set free. But now the Lord Himself tells them what they are to do: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

We could never feel the way these words must have jolted the disciples. Did the Lord really mean that they were to go back to hostile Jerusalem without Him, and then gradually carry the message concerning Him to every person on the face of the earth, including Samaritans and Gentiles too?

That is exactly what He meant! And that is exactly what had been done! AND IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT THIS IS ALL HE TOLD THEM TO DO AS FAR AS THE WORLD IS CONCERNED. "Just go and tell people everywhere what you know about Me!"

THAT MISSION HAS NEVER BEEN CHANGED!

Finally,

3. He speaks about Israel.

This was by request. What about Israel, the disciples wanted to know!

Here is where He closed the door. His answer amounted to a "No". BUT LET US ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT HE DID NOT SAY WHAT MANY ARE SAYING TODAY. He did NOT say that His purposes for Israel were to be forgotten. If they were, it would have been easy for Him to say so--and this is where it should have been said.

But He has not finished His plan for Israel. He is simply beginning here in the book of Acts something which was new as far as the revealed purpose of God was concerned.

But neither did the Lord say that there would be no ministry to Israel during this time. Or why would He send them back to "Jerusalem" and "in all Judaea." Every Jew and every Gentile needs to be reached with the Gospel in every generation!

Concl: "And, when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9).

There is something very final, very emphatic, about this verse. Of all that the Lord must have said to them during those 40 days, this was the heart of it all!

Where did the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ lead? It was as Luke suggests in Acts 1:1, the continuation of all that the Lord "began both to do and teach" while He was here on earth.

How important it is for us to have these words firmly fixed in our own hearts, or we will not be able to understand what our Lord is seeking to accomplish in our lives, and, through us, in the lives of the masses of the world who need Him.